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Leading Multicultural Teams: Are cultural differences barriers or drivers to a team's success? - Portuguese Managers' Perspective

Afonso Nascimento Bento

Master in International Management

Supervisor:
Ph.D., Ma Shaozhuang, Associate Professor
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Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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Resumo

Esta tese foca-se nas principais características culturais da cultura Portuguesa que impactam o sucesso da equipa, em compreender se as diferenças culturais são barreiras ou facilitadoras para o sucesso da equipa, em reunir estratégias eficazes para os líderes Portugueses aplicarem de forma a gerirem com sucesso diversidade cultural nas suas equipas, e nas competências necessárias para se tornarem líderes multiculturais de sucesso. A pesquisa foi realizada através de entrevistas semiestruturadas a 10 líderes Portugueses com vários anos de experiência em gestão de equipas multiculturais. As principais descobertas incluem a caracterização dos Portugueses como uma cultura de comunicação de contexto médio, de feedback negativo indireto, de liderança hierárquica e de tomada de decisão vertical. Para além disso, a criação de confiança não é baseada apenas em relações nem apenas em performance laboral, o conflito é evitado, o tempo é gerido de forma flexível e a persuasão é feita com uma abordagem *applications-first*. Adicionalmente, os resultados sugerem que as diferenças culturais são facilitadoras para o sucesso da equipa. Ademais, as melhores estratégias para liderar uma equipa multicultural são ouvir os membros da equipa e o líder compreender-se a si próprio e ao contexto em que está inserido. Finalmente, a pesquisa demonstra que a competência mais importante que um líder multicultural deve ter é empatia cultural. Enquanto as descobertas corroboram parte da literatura, também contribuem para a mesma, desafiando diversas ideias predefinidas e estabelecendo a base para futuros investigadores expandirem o conhecimento nesta área.

Palavras-chave: Cultura, Cultura Portuguesa, Liderança, Liderança de Equipas, Equipas Multiculturais
Classificação JEL: M12, M14

Abstract

This thesis' purpose is to understand if cultural differences are barriers or drivers to a team's success. To do so, this research focuses on the main cultural characteristics of the Portuguese culture that impact a team's success, on understanding if cultural differences are barriers or drivers to the success of a team, on gathering effective strategies for Portuguese leaders to apply to their leadership in order to successfully manage cultural diversity in their teams, and on the required skills to become a successful multicultural leader. This research was conducted by semi-structured interviews of 10 Portuguese managers with several years of experience in managing multicultural teams. The main findings include the characterization of the Portuguese as medium-context communicators, indirect negative feedback providers, hierarchical leaders, top-down decision makers, neither relationship-based nor task-based trust builders, confrontation avoiders, flexible time managers and applications-first persuaders. In addition to this, research results also suggest that cultural differences are drivers to a team's success. Furthermore, the best strategies to successfully lead a multicultural team are to listen to team members and to understand oneself and the context the leaders are inserted in. And finally, the research shows that the most important skill a multicultural leader must possess is cultural empathy. While the findings corroborate some of the literature, they also contribute to it by challenging several predefined ideas and setting the basis for future researchers to expand on this field of study.

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Introduction

In today's fast changing world, globalization and the development of multinational companies has overwhelmed organizations and leaders, and have caused managers to face new challenges: those related to the leadership of multicultural teams (Dumitrescu, Lie, & Dobrescu, 2014). As the business world becomes more and more diverse, and organizations find distinct forms of collaboration, global and culturally diverse teams are turning out to be the norm, rather than the exception (Zander, Mockaitis, & Butler, 2012). Accompanying this new paradigm for leaders and managers, come new challenges and problems that they must deal with. The battery of issues which derive from the current business landscape of cultural diversity is vast and has been the target of some research. In the article "Managing Multicultural Teams", the authors separate the obstacles that cultural differences can create in four barriers: direct versus indirect communication; trouble with accents and fluency; differing attitudes toward hierarchy and conflicting decision-making norms (Brett, Behfar, & Kern, 2009). These and other problems that have arisen from multicultural teams will be further explained and analysed throughout this work.

What is then surprising is the lack of research directly connected to leading culturally diverse teams. While some authors mention the absence of studies performed with leadership in global teams as the main focus of them or the failure to measure it directly (Davis & Bryant, 2003), others, such as Zander, Mockaitis and Butler (2012), simply acknowledge the shortage of literature on the topic and try to contribute to the increase in awareness about leading global teams. Considering the gap between the existent literature about this topic and the need for managers to understand how to lead multicultural teams, the main objective of this thesis is to narrow this knowledge gap by providing a collection of the most important concepts and ideas related to leading culturally diverse teams. In addition to setting a theoretical framework for future research on the topic, the aim is to establish a set of guidelines on how today's leaders ought to handle their multicultural team members. Moreover, the original research will focus specifically on how Portuguese leaders handle culture diversity in their teams, as this will enable the results to be more reliable and directly applied by current Portuguese managers.

So that the objectives set above can be accomplished, the following research questions will guide this study:

1. *What are the main cultural characteristics of the Portuguese culture that impact a team's success?*
2. *Are cultural differences barriers or drivers to the success of a team?*
3. *What strategies can Portuguese leaders apply to their leadership in order to successfully manage cultural diversity in their teams?*
4. *What are the required skills to become a successful multicultural leader?*

The first step of this thesis will be to study the extant research on multicultural leadership, establishing a theoretical framework for the exploration on how Portuguese leaders should handle team members from different cultural backgrounds. The main areas that are going to be covered in the literature review relate to culture and cultural clusters, the impact of cultural diversity in a team, and leadership competencies and skills required for multicultural teams. Consequently, the contextualization for the original research will be set and will have a solid theoretical framework as its basis. The analysis will be carried out by performing qualitative interviews to Portuguese leaders with experience in multicultural teams. The inputs gathered from these subjects will then be analysed and used to help answer the research questions. After collecting the findings and discussing the results, the most important implications from both the literature review and the interviews are going to be selected, so that a simple, yet crucial guide for Portuguese leaders who manage multicultural teams can be provided.

Acknowledging that no study covers all the information associated to a specific subject, the focus of future research will be suggested, so that the before mentioned gap between the existing literature and the need to better instruct multicultural leaders in how to deal with cultural-based problems can be diminished. As Brett, Behfar and Kern (2009) said: *teams whose members come from different nations and backgrounds place special demands on managers*. And we must contribute to match that demand with a supply of guidelines that can enable them to succeed in their role of leading global teams.

1. Literature Review

In order to achieve the purposes of this work, a theoretical basis for the original research is required. Therefore, the literature review will be focused in three main subjects: culture and cultural clusters, multicultural teams (MCTs) and leadership skills required to successfully manage transnational teams. Since culture colors nearly every aspect of human behaviour, a working knowledge of culture and its influences can be useful to executives operating in a multicultural business environment (Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, & House, 2006). Therefore, by structuring the review of the current research in this manner, it will be possible to systematize the overall process implemented in this study – understand the cultural aspects that impact a team's success, figure out the implicit and explicit characteristics of MCTs and how cultural differences enable or limit their success, and only then establish how can leaders leverage those differences and lead those groups into success.

1.1. Culture and Cultural Clusters

Nowadays, any business study based on culture and cultural differences, as well as on the impact of those discrepancies, will most probably mention Hofstede and/or some of its work. One of the author's main contributions to the literature is his definition of culture:

"Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another." (Hofstede, 1994, page 1)

But, as with any important field of study, culture and its impact on society has been the target of many researchers. In the paper "Critical reflections on some recent definitions of "culture"" (Gustav, 2012), the author reflects on the vast literature that covers definitions of culture, mentioning that the most astonishing feature of these definitions is their diversity. He goes on to say that authors often refer to their own interpretation of culture as the correct one and are even capable of demonstrating this successfully (by their own empirical studies).

Being a social construct that refers to a vast set of human phenomena, it is plausible that one can build its own definition based on the criteria he/she defines as important (Gustav, 2012). According to Lang (1997), "attempts at defining culture in a definite way are futile". But then, how can a basis for empirical research be set? Simply using the term "culture" without defining it does not seem appropriate and will lead to a lack of direction for the rest of the work. Therefore, and following Gustav's (2012) recommendation, for the remainder of this study, the concept of culture that will be considered is that culture is the set of norms, values, habits and traditions that influence the way humans react to specific situations, behaviours and other stimuli.

A practical example of this interpretation of culture can be seen in the different reactions which individuals might have towards a business meeting starting late. A person, who has always followed strict time schedules and has been taught to respect others' time by showing up ten minutes before

an appointment, will be negatively impacted by this situation, which in turn could lead to a deal falling out. On the other hand, an individual who is familiar to the customary ten minutes delay in every scheduled event of his/her life, will not be affected by this and might not even notice it. As portrayed in this example, the way both individuals were raised, their values, their habits and their traditions impacted tremendously how they answered to a business meeting not starting on time. For the purpose of this study, this conceptualization of culture is key for understanding the results that will be depicted. With this definition, the goal is simply to contextualize the analysis and research, providing a clear and transparent view into how culture will be looked at for the purpose of this thesis.

So that one may summarize intercultural similarities, as well as differences, cultural clustering can be an extremely useful approach (Gupta, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002). According to the authors, one of the biggest benefits of this method, from a managerial and practical point of view, is the ability that multinational corporations acquire in terms of deciding to which countries they should expand to, based on how similar the cultures are. Furthermore, managers in multinational corporations can place more effectively international assignees, establish compatible regional units, and predict the results of policies and practices across national boundaries (Ronen & Kraut, 1977, as cited in Ronen & Shenkar, 1985).

Multiple cluster studies have been performed, whilst attempting to define the correct cultural clusters that exist in today's world. However, disparate samples, methodologies and clustering factors have resulted in some variety between the results. Consequently, Ronen & Shenkar (1985) reviewed and summarized eight culture studies based on attitudinal dimensions: Haire, Ghiseli & Porter (1966); Sirota & Greenwood (1971); Ronen & Kraut (1977); Hofstede (1976); Griffeth, Hom, Denisi & Kirchner (1980); Hofstede (1980); Redding (1976); and Badawy (1979). As mentioned before, the factors which are utilized to cluster the countries together have a high impact on the results. The most relevant indicators in society clustering are religion/language, geography, ethnicity, and work-related values and attitudes (Gupta et al, 2002). Since the goal of this work is not to design a new model of cultural clustering, Ronen & Shenkar's (1985) review and synthesis of eight culture studies will be utilized in the research. Applying their peers' dimensions, and drawing from the similarities of results across all the eight studies, Ronen & Shenkar (1985) arrived at the following cultural clusters:

Cluster	Countries
Latin European	Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain
Anglo	Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom and United States of America
Germanic	Austria, Germany, and Switzerland
Nordic	Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden
Near Eastern	Greece, Iran, and Turkey
Arab	Abu-Dhabi, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates

Far Eastern	Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Vietnam, Taiwan, and Thailand
Latin American	Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela
Independent	Brazil, India, Israel, and Japan

Table 1.1 - Ronen & Shenkar's (1985) synthesis of cultural clusters

While the authors based their combination of cultural clusters in the eight studies mentioned before, their description of each cluster is built from Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions, succinctly explained as follows (Soares, Farhangmehr & Shoham, 2007):

Power distance reflects the consequences of power inequality and authority relations in society. It influences hierarchy and dependence relationships in the family and organizational contexts.

Uncertainty avoidance refers to "the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations" (Hofstede, 1991, as cited in Soares et al, 2007). This dimension deals with the need for well-defined rules for prescribed behavior.

Individualism–collectivism describes the relationships individuals have in each culture. In individualistic societies, people look after themselves and their immediate family only, whereas in collectivistic cultures, individuals belong to groups that look after them in exchange for loyalty. The more individualistic countries relate positively to variables such as personal time, freedom, challenge, the organization, and negatively to the use of skills, physical conditions, and training (Ronen & Shenkar, 1985).

Masculinity-femininity is related to the dominant values in societies. Masculine countries value achievement and success, while in feminine countries, caring for others and quality of life are the dominant drivers. According to Ronen & Shenkar (1985), concepts like manager, cooperation, desirable area, and employment security negatively relate to this dimension, while challenge, advancement, recognition, and earnings contribute positively.

Since Hofstede's original research was performed (from 1967 to 1973), other authors have added on several other dimensions. In addition to this, the validity of the findings is often questioned, since they might be outdated (Soares et al, 2007). Recognizing the existence of some limitations to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, a different model will be utilized, since it will enable a more updated framework and foundation for the research – Erin Meyer's Culture Map (Meyer, 2015).

The author used her vast intercultural experience to construct this model (Figure 1.1) and it is based around eights scales that represent a key area which managers must be aware of, with each one showing how cultures vary along a spectrum, from one extreme to the other. The eight scales are

communicating, evaluating, persuading, leading, deciding, trusting, disagreeing, and scheduling. A small explanation of each scale follows.

Figure 1.1 - Erin Meyer's (2015) 8 scale model

For the communicating scale, on one hand you have "low-context" cultures in which good communication is precise, simple, and clear, messages are expressed and understood at face value, and repetition is appreciated if it helps clarify the communication (ex: USA, Germany, Netherlands, and Australia). On the opposite side of the scale, there are "high-context" countries, where good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered, messages are both spoken and read between the lines and are often implied but not plainly expressed (ex: Japan, Korea, China and Indonesia).

When evaluating, cultures vary from "direct negative feedback" where it is provided frankly, bluntly, and honestly, negative messages are not softened by positive ones, absolute descriptors are often used (such as "totally" or "completely") when criticizing and criticism may be given to an individual in front of a group (ex: Russia, Israel, Germany and Netherlands), to "indirect negative feedback" where it is given softly, subtly, and diplomatically, positive messages are used to wrap negative ones, qualifying descriptors are commonly used (like "sort of" or "slightly") when criticizing, and criticism is given only in private (ex: Japan, Thailand, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia).

When it comes to persuading, cultures in which individuals are trained to begin with a fact, statement, or opinion and only later add concepts to back up or explain the conclusion, in which the preference is to begin a message or report with an executive summary or bullet points, in which discussions are approached in a practical, concrete manner and in which theoretical or philosophical discussions are avoided in a business environment are denominated as "applications-first" cultures (ex: Italy, France, Spain and Russia). On the other extreme of the persuading scale, we have the "principles-first" cultures where people are trained to first develop the theory or complex concept

before presenting a fact, statement, or opinion, where it is preferable to begin a message or report by building up a theoretical argument before moving on to a conclusion and where the conceptual principles underlying each situation are valued (ex: USA, Canada, Australia and UK).

In Meyer's (2015) book, the leading scale is limited by an "egalitarian" style in one end and a "hierarchical" style in the other. Egalitarian cultures (ex: Denmark, Sweden, Netherlands and Australia) demonstrate a small distance between the boss and the subordinate, consider the best boss as a facilitator among equals, have flat organizational structures and often skip hierarchical lines when communicating. As for the hierarchical cultures (ex: Japan, Korea, India and China), the ideal distance between a boss and a subordinate is high, the best boss is a strong director who leads from the front, status is important, organizational structures are multi-layered and fixed, and communication follows set hierarchical lines.

In relation to the deciding scale, the author distinguishes between "consensual" cultures and "top-down" cultures. The former (ex: Japan, Sweden and Netherlands) are characterized by having their decisions made in groups through unanimous agreement, while the latter (ex: Nigeria, China and Russia) have their decisions made by individuals, usually the boss.

The sixth scale of the model is trusting. In this one, "task-based" cultures limit one end, with trust being built through business-related activities, work relationships being built and dropped easily, based on the practicality of the situation, with a person's reliability being proven by his/her consistent good work and with basically a mentality of "I enjoy working with you, I trust you." (ex: USA, Denmark, Netherlands, and Germany). On the other end of the spectrum, there are the "relationship-based" cultures (such as Saudi Arabia, India, China and Nigeria) which are characterized by building trust through sharing meals, evening drinks, and visits at the coffee machine, by building up work relationships slowly over the long term, and by people having a "I have seen who you are at a deep level, I have shared personal time with you, I know others well who trust you, I trust you" approach to trusting someone.

Meyer (2015) states that cultures can either be "confrontational" or "avoid confrontation" in terms of disagreeing. The former includes countries such as Israel, France, Germany, and Russia, and for them, disagreement and debate are positive for the team or organization and open confrontation is appropriate and will not negatively impact the relationship. In contrast, countries like Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, and Ghana, see disagreement and debate as negative for the team or organization and open confrontation as inappropriate and a way of breaking group harmony or negatively impacting the relationship.

Finally, the scheduling scale has Germany, Switzerland, Japan, Sweden, and other countries as the "linear-time" cultures and Saudi Arabia, India, Nigeria, and Kenya among the "flexible-time" cultures. In "linear-time" countries, project steps are approached in a sequential fashion, completing one task

before beginning the next, things are done one at a time with no interruptions, the focus is on the deadline and sticking to the schedule, and emphasis is put on promptness and good organization over flexibility. For "flexible-time" countries, project steps are approached in a fluid manner, changing tasks as opportunities arise, multiple things are dealt with simultaneously and interruptions are accepted, the focus is on adaptability and flexibility is valued over organization.

The value of this model is that it easily depicts real-life situations. As a matter of fact, it does not take much experience to easily identify some behaviour we have witnessed and immediately associated with the country's position in the respective scale.

It is therefore possible to place the Portuguese culture in each of these scales (Figure 1.2), and paint a picture of how, in general, Portuguese people behave in the business world. According to Meyer (2015), the Portuguese culture can be characterized as follows. Firstly, in terms of communication, the Portuguese tend to be more "high-context" which means that they are more inclined to perceive good communication as sophisticated, nuanced and layered, and messages are often implied but not plainly expressed. According to Treven, Mulej & Lynn (2008), in these cultures, people do not rely on language alone for communication - tone of voice, timing, and facial expressions are often used tools for communicating messages.

In terms of evaluating, there is no clear tendency for the Portuguese as they are placed in the middle of the scale. Naturally, when compared to other more direct cultures, the Portuguese will be seen as a culture that would much rather provide negative feedback in a soft, subtle and diplomatic way, while using positive messages to wrap negative ones – indirect negative feedback providers. On the other hand, if compared with more indirect cultures, the Portuguese way of providing negative feedback will be regarded as frank, blunt and honest. In reality, studies have shown that employees will react better to negative feedback and be motivated to improve their performance, if that evaluation's source is credible and if it is delivered in a considerate manner (Steelman & Rutkowski, 2004). This would tend to improve the subsequent results of a feedback session in the cultures where these conversations are based in a more indirect communication style, but that specific topic is out of the scope of this study.

Meyer (2015) places the Portuguese closer to the hierarchical end of the scale when it comes to leadership styles. In other words, leadership in the Portuguese culture can be described with a high distance between leader and subordinate, with an expectancy that the boss leads from the front and with multi-layered and fixed organizational structures. Authors have used three different constructs to define hierarchical leadership – transformational leadership, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), and supervisory career mentoring (Kram, 1985 cited by Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014). First, a transformational leader's behaviours are aimed at inspiring follower motivation and stimulating them to stretch their capabilities and to go beyond typical performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Secondly, according to Hoch

& Kozlowski (2014), LMX is concerned with the nature and the quality of the direct relationship between the team leader and each member. And finally, there is supervisory career mentoring, which, as explained by Ostroff & Kozlowksi (1993) (cited by Hoch & Kozlowksi, 2014), further aids in the development of strong personal relationships that help strengthen leader influence on the team member. In other words, hierarchical leadership can be looked at as a style of managing people that is strongly based on a relationship where the leader is not at the same level as the team member, and thus the leader is expected to be an example, to direct the employees and to guide them.

As for the deciding scale, its evaluation falls in line with the previous one – the Portuguese tend to have a top-down decision-making process, where decisions are normally made by individuals and then passed on to the team. While many organizational development consultants argue that decision-making should be relatively "flat" or "non-hierarchical", rather than "top-down", Koplowitz (2008) argues otherwise, saying that managers should unilaterally decide the tasks and resources to assign subordinates and the departmental strategy, and defending that the best organizational decisions and the best employee working conditions happen when a leader is one developmental level more capable than the subordinate, and all employees are accountable for giving their manager their best advice. Nonetheless, the purpose of this study is not to investigate the best way to make decisions, but simply to comprehend the main cultural characteristics of the Portuguese that impact a team's success.

In Meyer's (2015) model, the Portuguese trust building process is characterized as more relationship-based than task-based. In the real world, this means that trust is built through evening drinks, visits at the coffee machine and overall shared moments. Also, relationships are built up slowly through time and are not easily dropped. This contrasts with the more task-based cultures in which trust is built through business-related activities and relationships are built and dropped easily, depending on the practicality of the situation. Some authors have been known to argue that the trust building process, no matter in what culture, is a slow one as it needs personal knowledge, regular face-to-face interaction, empathy, respect , and genuine listening (Hakanen & Soudunsaari, 2012). Furthermore, the authors also mention that a shared vision, clear roles and responsibilities, willingness for cooperation, and supporting and encouraging leadership are other tools that can be used to build trust in teams. Comparing both views (Meyer's characterization of the Portuguese way of building trust and Hakanen & Soundunsaari's perspective on what is required to build trust), one could conclude that the Portuguese culture is naturally more capable of building trust between members of a team, as they are pulled towards a more relationship-based interaction, thus facilitating the use of the "trust-building tools" of a team.

Just as it happens in the evaluating scale, the Portuguese culture falls right in the middle of the disagreeing range. Consequently, Portuguese are not defined as a confrontational culture where disagreement and debate are positive for the team, and open confrontation is seen as appropriate and

it will not negatively affect the relationship , nor as "confrontation avoiders" where disagreement is perceived to be a negative thing for an organization and open conflict is inappropriate and breaks group harmony. In their 2001 study, De Dreu & Van Vianen suggest that collaborating and trying to resolve team conflicts distracts team members from their tasks, while avoiding the confrontations appears to be more functional as it allows team members to pursue and focus on task performance.

In regards to the scheduling scale, the Portuguese are placed closer to the flexible time cultures, instead of the linear-time ones. In practical terms, this reflects on projects being approached in a fluid manner, changing tasks as opportunities surge, on many things being dealt with simultaneously, on the focus being on adaptability, and on flexibility being valued over organization. Time management is a very sensitive issue, as different people, cultures, and personalities can adapt differently to distinct strategies. Stavrou & Kilaniotis (2010) explored the relationship between flexible work arrangements and turnover for the Anglo and Nordic cultural clusters. Their findings suggest that in the Anglo cluster, unsocial hours (overtime, shift work and weekend work) and part-time (part-time and job-sharing) arrangements were positively related with turnover. On the other hand, with the increase of schedule flexibility (telework, work from home and flexible time), turnover decreases in the Nordic cluster. What these findings consequently show is that there is no universal applicability of time management strategies, since people will react differently and companies must be aware of this, especially if operating internationally.

And finally, when it comes to how the Portuguese persuade people, Meyer (2015) defines them as having a strong principles-first approach. In other words, individuals have been trained to first develop the theory and concept before presenting a fact, opinion, or statement, and it is preferable to start a message by building up a theoretical argument before moving on to a conclusion. Having a very strong academic presence in the society makes the culture prone to be more principles-first because in all levels of schooling, people are taught to give complete answers, to justify very clearly their opinion and to not blur out any statement without first contextualizing it.
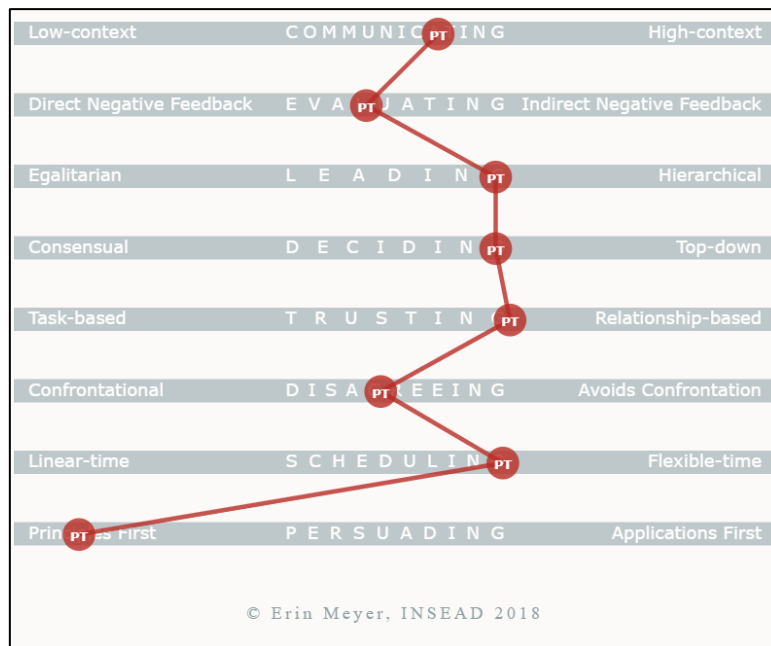
Figure 1.2 - Portugal's Culture Map

Source: Country Mapping Tool at https://erinmeyer.com/tools/culture-map-premium/

This cultural mapping of Portugal sets the basis for the original research, as it will look to test these placements and understand the underlying reasons for each cultural tendency of the Portuguese.

1.2. Multicultural Teams (MCTs)

In their paper "Leadership modes: Success strategies for multicultural teams", Zander and Butler (2010) start off by stating the shift that has occurred related to working in teams, turning this previous "management fad of the month" into the contemporary "*modus operandi*". Therefore, deriving from the current globalization process and global integration of multinational companies, MCTs are now perceived as an attractive way of dealing with local specifics while achieving global coordination (Zander & Butler, 2010). Be that as it may, achieving the desired outcomes in MCTs has proved difficult for managers (Butler, 2006) and how they can effectively lead them will be further discussed in the next subchapter.

As Snow et al (1996) mention, these multicultural teams are at the "heart of the globalization" and organizations expect them to contribute with augmented efficiency, be the source of creative initiatives (Galbraith, 2000; McLeod & Lobel, 1992) and overall act as the connection between country and cultural borders. Organizations must realize that people embedded in a given cultural context will usually share certain world-views (Alderfer & Smith, 1982, as cited in Chevrier, 2003), including specific representations of appropriate ways of cooperating, managing conflicts, accepting authority, or simply communicating (d'Iribarne *et al*, 1998 and Triandis, 1994, as cited in Chevrier, 2003). Consequently, management and leadership of MCTs involves effectively and creatively dealing with a variety of

challenges that emerge as people from different cultural backgrounds interact with each other to accomplish the team's task (Halverson & Tirmizi, 2008).

Whether a team benefits from having cultural diversity within it or not, is a topic that has received significant attention from authors, even if with several inconsistencies (Hajro & Pudelko, 2010). Diversity in a team originates innovation and creativity, with several world views in the process of finding solutions providing multiple ways of solving problems (Miller, Fields, Kumar, & Ortiz, 2000). Chevrier (2003) also supports this view by acknowledging that heterogeneity amongst teams provides a panoply of perspectives that increases the available pool of resources that the members of those cross-cultural teams can bring to bear on complex problems. On the other hand, Chevrier (2003) reverts back to the groups' processes to mention that the above-mentioned cultural differences can bring ambiguity, complexity, and confusion, resulting in diminished effectiveness of the team. In addition to this, Miller *et al* (2000) say that it is much easier for members of a homogeneous team to communicate with and understand one another, since they tend to speak the same language, use the same words, expressions, meanings and rely on the same verbal and nonverbal cues to communicate.

A very profound and interesting discussion can be performed on the advantages and disadvantages of having a transnational team. Nonetheless, the focus of this thesis is on the leader and how he/she can cope with cultural divergence. In fact, according to Ciulla (2007), the main purpose of studying leadership is to understand what a good leader is. The author goes on to say that there are two main criteria for evaluating how good the commander of a team is: effectiveness and ethics. The competencies required of a multicultural leader to direct his/her group towards success will be further discussed in the next subchapter.

1.3. Leadership of Multicultural Teams (MCTs)

The moderation and management of the impact that cultural heterogeneity has in the teams' relationships, collaboration methods and overall functioning towards a common goal and vision, is the leader's role and he/she serves as the bridge between team members and links them with the before mentioned joint objectives (Zander, Mockaitis, & Butler, 2012).

As Hajro and Pudelko (2010) concluded, leadership is critical to MCTs' performance (cited by Zander et al, 2012). What is then crucial to understand is which competencies leaders must have, in order to turn a team's cultural heterogeneity into an advantage, rather than an obstacle to its success. As expected, multiple authors have worked on putting together the set of skills required of a leader to ensure its MCT's success. Dumitrescu *et al* (2014) found different sets of competencies, according to several authors: Firstly, Adler (2002) defends that a global manager must be able to implement cultural sensitivity and diplomacy, to foster relationships that create respect for all parties, to communicate clearly, to solve cultural problems synergistically and to negotiate across cultures.

Other authors look at the importance of using cultural differences to gain competitive advantage in a globalized marketplace by using the leader's ability to understand and communicate across multiple cultures, the ability to create and sustain business teams in a global setting and the ability to support the complex process of facilitating team-work (O'Hara-Devereau & Johansen, 1994).

According to London & Sessa (1999), there are nine culture-related dimensions that a multicultural leader should have – comfort with other cultures, positive evaluation of other cultures, understanding cultural differences, empathy for people in other cultures, valuing cultural differences, open-mindedness, sharing cultural differences with others, understand the differences in relation to how much feedback is wanted and adaptability.

Mendenhall, Kuhlmann & Stahl (2001) identified tolerance for ambiguity, behavioural flexibility, goal orientation, sociability and interest in other people, empathy and meta-communication as the primary competencies required to be a successful leader of a MCT.

Moreover, Miller *et al* (2000) pinpointed a few characteristics which can enhance the probability of success of a multicultural leader: an open style of management increases trust; a good sense of humour can diffuse potential misunderstandings; a sincere interest in the staff as individuals goes a long way toward creating good morale; and, a good communication style is also important.

Finally, and according to Chan & Tharenou's (2004) findings, there are five main themes, and 27 subsequent sub-themes, that represent a leader's competent management of a multicultural group. The following table summarizes their results:

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
Cultural empathy	Cultural awareness	Be aware of how people interact and the values they place on various aspects of work
	Cultural understanding	Understand the differences that may arise
	Respecting other values	Respect the differences and values of other cultures
	Treating people as individuals	Treat people as individuals first, rather than as members of a culture
	Using different perspectives	"Put yourself in someone else's shoes"
	Experience in other cultures	Understand and respect the differences based on your own experience
Learning on the job	Adapting to the context/flexibility	Adapt what has been learned to the context
	Curiosity	Show interest in the subordinate's culture
	Willingness to learn	Be willing to learn about the subordinate's culture
	Tolerance for ambiguity	Accept that you need to ask questions in order to learn and adapt to new cultures
	Being observant	Observe the nuances and undercurrents of other cultures in the workplace
Communication competence	Listening	Listen carefully and actively to what is important to the subordinates
	Open-door policy (being open)	Facilitate a safe space for people to speak
	Clear expression	Use simple straight language
	Non-verbal nuances	Some cultures prefer non-verbal nuances instead of clear communication
	Knowing other languages	Learn other languages and use this as an added advantage
Generical managerial skills	Motivating	These generic skills are obviously appreciated by any subordinate and expected of any leader, whether it is a multicultural one or not.
	Consulting	
	Human resource functions	
	Conflict resolution	
	Planning	
	Goal/task focus	
	Budgeting	
Personal Style	Emotional stability	Provide a stable workplace by being calm, patient and stable
	Focusing on commonalities	Focus on commonalities between culture, instead of only in the differences
	Being frank/honesty	Be honest
	Sense of humour	Keep the mood joyful and friendly

Table 1.2 - Chan & Tharenou's (2004) themes and sub-themes

Clearly, multicultural leadership research has devoted a lot of effort into finding the specific set of competencies that enables a leader to successfully manage his/her multicultural team. However, companies themselves should also pay attention to some details before choosing an individual to manage a team with cultural diversity. As Hajro & Pudelko (2010) mention in their paper "An analysis of core-competences of successful multinational team leaders", the first step an organization should take is to be aware of the required skills that MCTs' leaders should possess to effectively lead those teams (such as the ones mentioned before). Secondly, companies must value the role of the leader, especially in the knowledge creating process, since he/she is responsible for converting context-specific knowledge into context-generic knowledge. Third, this type of leaders should be supported by a corporate culture that is compatible with the basic conceptions of those who are involved in transnational relationships. Also, enterprises should place their leaders through cross-cultural assignments, as team members and then as team leaders, providing them with practical multicultural knowledge. Fifth, organizations must accept the fact that in the early stages of forming a MCT, the cultural differences will likely result in disagreements, and should trust their leader to solve these issues. Finally, companies should only select multicultural leaders who are cross-culturally competent, multilingual, and able to motivate members to share and transfer knowledge within the team.

From defining culture and cultural clusters (and subsequently identifying the culture characterization model to be used), to describing the main Portuguese cultural characteristics that impact a team's success, to gathering the key insights into how cultural differences can become barriers or drivers to the success of a team and, finally, to determine the needed skills for a leader to successfully manage a multicultural team, the basis for the original research is now set. The foundation established with the theoretical framework identified in this chapter enables a more focused and oriented work in terms of the empirical research. As Boote & Beile (2005, p.3) said, cited by Randolph (2009):

"A researcher cannot perform significant research without first understanding the literature in the field."

2. Methodology

2.1. Rationale

Leadership is a very deeply researched field of study, as is the relationship between the leaders and the members. Also, culture and the cultural differences between people is a topic which has deserved a lot of attention, especially as the world becomes more global. However, these two areas of research have still to be sufficiently intertwined and understood as two simultaneously impactful forces in teams. This is where the research rationale is born – what are the main cultural characteristics of the Portuguese culture that impact a team's success? Are cultural differences barriers or drivers to the success of a team? What strategies can Portuguese leaders apply to their leadership in order to successfully manage cultural diversity in their teams? These, among others, are the topics that are still to be covered by the extant literature. The main objective of the research was to understand how leaders feel that cultural differences impact their teams' performance and in what way they have to adapt their leadership to the cultural diversity in their teams.

Consequently, the methodology chosen was qualitative semi-structured interviews, the most common of all qualitative research methods (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, cited by Qu & Dumay, 2011). As Qu & Dumay (2011) explain, this type of interview involves prepared questioning guided by identified themes in a consistent and systematic manner, interposed with probes designed to elicit more elaborate responses, and it enables interviewees to provide responses in their own terms and in the way they think. As some authors have said before (Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey, 2015), semi-structured interviews are suited for situations where the researcher needs to ask probing, open-ended questions and wants to know the independent thoughts of each participant. Due to the match between the research needs and the benefits of semi-structured interviews before mentioned, it was then clear that the best way of trying to answer the research questions was to use this method of research.

2.2. Sample

The criteria that the participants had to meet to be eligible was simple: be of Portuguese nationality and have experience as a leader of a multicultural team. For the selection of participants, both convenience (choosing individuals who fit the criteria in any way possible) and snowballing (researchers ask the participants they have identified to recommend other participants) sampling was applied (Emerson, 2015). Firstly, to select the interviewees, I focused on the leaders that a) met the required criteria and b) were within reach of my own network. I contacted former colleagues, friends and family members and questioned them if they knew someone who was both Portuguese and had experience in leading multicultural teams. After exhausting my network's reach, I moved on to the snowballing strategy – I enquired the leaders I interviewed if they were able to put me in contact with another individual that met the criteria.

In the end, I was able to interview 10 different Portuguese leaders, with diversified backgrounds, positions and working in different industries. Table 2.1 depicts specific information from each leader that enables a better understanding of the sample:

ID	Age	Education	Position	Industry	Experience with MCTs	International Subordinates
A	34	Engineering	Global Integration & Separation Manager	Pharmaceutical	7 years	10 to 15
B	53	Finance/ Accounting	Administrator	International Trade & Development	26 years	Around 1000
C	31	Management	Co-Founder	Accommodation	7 years	4
D	53	Engineering	Professor	Academia	1 year	6
E	35	Economics	Deputy Head - Credit Analysis Services	Banking	5 years	5
F	55	Engineering	Commercial Director	Telecommunications	9 years	Around 650
G	35	Management	Co-Founder & CEO	Health, Wellness & Fitness	10 years	6
H	34	Engineering	Co-Founder	Health, Wellness & Fitness	8 years	6
I	30	Management/ Engineering	Co-Founder	Food & Beverages	4 years	7
J	32	Finance	Senior Credit Portfolio Advisor	Banking	4 years	10

Tabela 2.1 - Sample Characterization

In total, 10 male Portuguese leaders with experience in managing a MCT were interviewed. The age of the participants ranged from 30 to 55 years old, with seven of them being between 30 and 35 years old. In terms of experience in leading multicultural teams, the extremes are quite separated: from one year (leader D) to 26 years (leader B), the participants showed a high diversity when it comes to their personal experience with other cultures. And finally, in terms of the number of international subordinates that are currently reporting directly to the participants (or reported in the past), eight of the leaders manage or managed 15 or less international team members. Please note that Leader B is an administrator of a company and considers as direct reporters about 1000 employees, and participant F, who also started a company abroad, was leading a team of about 650 workers.

From the table above, it is very clear that all participants have leadership roles in their respective companies, which helps corroborate the findings of the original research, as the interviewees are in fact leading teams. Besides the 10 leaders characterized above, I was also in contact with three other Portuguese individuals that, due to scheduling issues, I was not able to interview. Furthermore, I attempted to contact around other five possible participants via LinkedIn message to enlarge my sample, but with no success. In conclusion, from a pool of 18 different prospect participants, I interviewed 10 Portuguese leaders with diverse backgrounds, from different industries and with distinct positions.

2.3. Process

The process for this thesis lasted for one year, from October 2019 to September 2020, and embodied four different macro-phases. The first phase was related to the clear and concrete definition of the object of study and lasted for roughly three months, as it was necessary to balance both the interest of the topic to be studied and the validity of it, by understanding if the extant literature already covered all possible areas of the field.

In phase two, a deep dive into the existing literature on culture, multicultural teams and leadership of multicultural teams was performed so that two goals were accomplished: set the theoretical basis for the empirical research and narrow down the specific purposes of the thesis. This second phase was the one which took the longest (from approximately January 2020 to May 2020), as it propelled regular moments of reanalysing and revisiting the study's object, purposes, and research questions.

Phase three embodied the participant selection and interview processes. Even though I started by identifying participant requisites and possible leaders from my own network, the two processes were not performed separately. The interviews and participant selection procedures overlapped through most of the duration of my research. As I performed semi-structured interviews digitally or via telephone that lasted for about 30 minutes, I was also on a constant pursuit of enlarging my sample. This third phase lasted for about four months, starting in June 2020 and finishing in September 2020, with all interviews being performed either in the early morning hours (ex: 9AM) or late afternoon (i.e. 7PM), in order to escape normal business hours since both the participants and myself were working full-time during this period. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants to facilitate the data analysing procedure that will be discussed further on, and followed the same guiding questions prepared in advance, divided into four parts (see Appendix A): i) contextualization (characterizing the leader); ii) culture and cultural differences (assessing the leaders' perceptions on the Portuguese culture and on the cultures of their subordinates); iii) multicultural teams (evaluating the leaders' opinions in terms of the impact that cultural diversity has in a team and its leadership); and iv) leadership competencies and skills (understanding the leaders' view on required leaderships skills for multicultural teams). As with any qualitative approach of collecting information, some respondents were more open to give examples, justifications and details about their answers. Nonetheless, by using strategically placed probe questions, as Qu & Dumay (2011) say semi-structured interviews should have, it was possible to enable the interviewees to expand on their views and opinions (ex: "Can you please expand on that?").

The final phase was the results analysing process, which lasted for the whole month of September. It was in this phase that I not only evaluated the 10 interviews in depth, but also established my research findings and how they answered the study's underpinning questions. The next subchapter details the fourth and final phase of my work.

2.4. Data Analysis

The approach chosen to evaluate the interviews was the factist approach (Alasuutari, 1995, cited by Talja, 1999). As the author explains, when using this method, the researcher's focus is the contents of each interviewee's answer, as they reveal something about the phenomena or processes occurring either in the participants' inner realities or external reality, which are the true object of study of the researcher. This is true for this research, as the main objective is to understand how the leaders' experience with multicultural teams as affected their views on the characteristics of Portuguese culture that impact a team's success, on how cultural differences limit or enhance a team's success, and on what strategies Portuguese leaders can apply to successfully manage cultural diversity in their teams.

Furthermore, the data analysis component of the research embodied three different stages. The first stage was based on watching and listening to the interviews' recordings and making notes of each leader's answers. In this case, no word-by-word transcript of each interview was written, but instead some sections of the leaders' discourse were selected as providing the satisfactory answer to the questions, whereas other parts were ignored or treated as unimportant, since this method will result in a logical and coherent picture of the participants' views (Gilbert & Muray, 1984, cited by Talja, 1999).

The second stage of the data analysis process was to interpret the notes and, for the responses which were not very clear and direct, conclude what was the most direct answer that satisfied the needs of the question. For example, when leader J was asked "how does feedback work in the Portuguese culture?", he answered that it depended on the personality of the person, but, in general, the Portuguese tend to want to be friends with everyone and want to see everyone happy. From this excerpt of his answer's notes, it was possible to conclude that he believes that the Portuguese culture tends more to the "indirect negative feedback" extreme of the evaluating scale. From this interpretation of the notes, I was able to more clearly identify each leader's assumed perspective on each subject.

The third and final stage was to study the 10 leaders' responses to each question all together. The objective of this last step was to generalize the findings since, as Talja (1999) mentions, research results of a factist methodology are generalizable when the quantity of data is large. The following chapter depicts the outcomes of the original research.

3. Findings

As the interviews were guided towards the topics of interest, it was possible to discuss each of the research questions in detail with the leaders. Therefore, the research findings can be structured in accordance with the research questions:

1. *What are the main cultural characteristics of the Portuguese culture that impact a team's success?*
2. *Are cultural differences barriers or drivers to the success of a team?*
3. *What strategies can Portuguese leaders apply to their leadership in order to successfully manage cultural diversity in their teams?*
4. *What are the required skills to become a successful multicultural leader?*

3.1. Main Characteristics of the Portuguese Culture

Using Erin Meyer's culture map, each interviewee had to give his own opinion and essentially place the Portuguese culture in each scale, illustrating their perspective with examples or simple justifications. The following table synthetizes the research results in this area:

Scale	Findings
Communicating	It is not possible to define the Portuguese as low-context, nor as high-context communicators.
Evaluating	Seven out of the 10 leaders believe that the Portuguese tend to use indirect negative feedback.
Leading	The Portuguese culture tends to have a more hierarchical leadership style.
Deciding	Portuguese decision-making is closer to the "top-down" extreme of the deciding scale.
Trusting	The Portuguese are neither purely relationship-based, nor task-based.
Disagreeing	Portuguese tend to avoid confrontation whenever possible.
Scheduling	In terms of time management, flexibility is the key.
Persuading	The most common view was that the Portuguese are an "application-first" culture.

Table 3.1 - Summary of the Main Characteristics of the Portuguese Culture

Communication

Firstly, in relation to how Portuguese communicate, there was not one universal answer. While leaders A, E, G and J portrayed the culture as high-context, saying that Portuguese "always try to find a way to explain something in an indirect manner" or that "people would rather have a couple of sentences to reinforce what was said in the first one", others (such as participants B, F and I) believe that the Portuguese tend to be low-context communicators, especially if you compare them with cultures that are naturally more careful with the words they use and the effect they have on the other person (ex: Angolan culture). To cement this evaluation of the Portuguese communication style, leaders C, D and H also said that the Portuguese way of communication falls somewhere in between low-context and high-context. It is worth noting that the three participants that placed the Portuguese culture in the middle of the scale, all started with explaining that through their own experience, they had come across cultures which very clearly belonged on each extreme of the scale and that therefore the

Portuguese could not be defined as low-context or high-context communicators. Interviewee C had experiences with Turkish and Italian workers, who he paints as being "way more direct than the Portuguese", as well as with Swiss and British team members who he says are much more "politically correct". Another one of the participants (leader H) mentioned his time working with Swedish and Germans who communicate in a very low-context manner, and then the opposite happened when he moved to New York, where he found people were much less transparent. Leader D placed the Portuguese culture in the middle of the scale because of his involvement with Northern European cultures that tend to be more straightforward, going directly to the point as quickly as possible, while the "Portuguese are more concerned with the way they say things and that makes them less straightforward in terms of communication".

To sum up, the leaders' perception on how Portuguese communicate is very much related to the experiences they have had in the past. This goes in line with Meyer's (2015) idea that you cannot look at a culture in an absolute manner, but rather in relation to others – the leaders who worked with very direct/low-context cultures (such as the Germanic one) found it impossible to characterize the Portuguese in the same way, while the participants who experienced the high-context communication of the Anglo culture cluster thought of the Portuguese as low-context communicators.

Evaluating

When it comes to evaluating, the leaders were asked how they felt that feedback, especially negative, works in the Portuguese culture. The majority (seven) gravitated to the "indirect negative feedback" side of the scale, while the remaining three leaders did not feel that this feature could be explained by culture, but by the person's own personality. In truth, not one participant said that the Portuguese way of providing negative feedback was the direct one. The reasons for this varied from "Portuguese people tend to be emotional and to be people-pleasers and thus, do not want to risk hurting the other person" (leader C), to "Portuguese try to emphasize the positive, even if the result is not the best" (leader D), and even to "in terms of historical and moral background, giving straight negative feedback can be seen as rash and unpolite in the Portuguese culture, so there is a big restriction in terms of being direct in any type of communication" (leader E). In this cultural characteristic, the most interesting fact was the overall desire that most leaders showed in terms of moving away from this paradigm of giving feedback, with some participants making it very clear that even though they would characterize the Portuguese culture as indirect negative feedback providers, they did not put themselves in the same basket.

A common insight that multiple participants mentioned was the fact that it depends on the personality of the person who is giving the feedback, but also of the person who is receiving it. Leader H used the following example: "if you want to own a dog, having a poodle and a german shepherd is

not the same – each has its own qualities and a leader must understand how to adapt to different characteristics". The participant used this comparison to illustrate his opinion that people react to negative feedback differently – some employees get motivated when they are told that they are not performing, while others take it very hard and it can even hinder their results even more. This idea that leaders must comprehend who they are talking to and adapt their communication accordingly was also explained by interviewee I who said that "direct negative feedback can kill the motivation of the worker if he/she is not a winner, while a winner will say "tell me what is wrong and let me work"".

In general, it was common across all interviews that the Portuguese culture tends to the indirect negative feedback side of the evaluating scale, due to the need of pleasing people and the care that is taken to not harm the other person's feelings.

Leading

As it happened when the evaluating scale was discussed, for leadership styles there was a clear separation from how the leaders characterized the Portuguese way of leading and their own style. However, there was a clear common opinion on this scale – the Portuguese culture tends to have a more hierarchical leadership style. Again, some leaders compared the Portuguese culture with others. For example, participant H mentioned that if you look at the Nordic cultures, they are very egalitarian, which means that everyone is treated in the same manner, independent of their social or economic status. On the other hand, Portuguese people tend to look at authority to solve their problems and if there is no clear leadership in a team and ownership of responsibilities, things start to fall apart because people need a hierarchy. Another example was given through the comparison of the Angolan, the Portuguese, and the Anglo cultures. Here, leader F said that if you compare the Portuguese culture with the Angolan one, the Portuguese will be seen as having an egalitarian leadership style, but if you compare the Portuguese with countries from the Anglo culture cluster, the opposite happens, and the Portuguese culture is seen as hierarchical.

An interesting finding from this leading scale was that leadership styles do not depend solely on the leader. In other words, they also depend on the team members and on the company's culture, more than on the culture of the leader. Firstly, even if the person who is leading the MCT wants to implement an egalitarian style, some employees simply tend to behave in a way that shapes the team's dynamic into being more hierarchical (ex: dropping everything they were doing if the leader gives a simple idea and/or expecting someone on the team to take full responsibility for a specific objective instead of the whole team working towards it and claiming the benefits as a group – leader H). Additionally, leader I reinforced that the leadership style is heavily influenced by the company's culture. He used his own experience of working in three different foreign organisations, in which two of them were focused on the local Portuguese economy and one of them has a global mindset. The

real-life consequence of these different focuses was that the two companies focused on Portugal had naturally implemented a Portuguese leadership culture (hierarchical), while the global company enabled a more egalitarian culture, thus demonstrating the influence that organizational culture has on the same leader and his/her leadership style.

Deciding

Without ever escaping an occasional "it depends on the person" or "it depends on the team", or even "it depends on the organization", the Portuguese culture is definitely closer to the "top-down" extreme of the deciding scale in the perspective of the participants. Going together with the leading scale, the Portuguese people look at their leaders to not only lead, but also to make decisions and guide them in the right direction. Even though this was the prevailing perspective, leaders A, E and G showed some reservations in regards to this form of operating. Additionally, leader G claims that decision-making should be shared so the team feels ownership of the decisions and feels that they are responsible for the results that those decisions bring. This participant went on to add that "it is the leader's responsibility to share the vision, guidelines and principles of the company in terms of decision-making" to make sure that the team members are empowered to make their own decisions without ever compromising the organization.

Another aspect that was mentioned by participants A and E was that things are changing, and the younger generations of leaders and workers are starting to understand the benefits that consensual decision-making brings to a team's success. Consequently, "people are starting to be more constructive in the way they disagree with leaders' opinions" while in the past they would just accept it and continue to feed the top-down decision-making cycle (leader A).

Trusting

A consensus among the leaders' opinions was that the Portuguese are neither purely relationship-based, nor task-based. One way of building trust cannot live without the other. As an example, leader I said, "In my case, I can have a team member that performs the best, but if I do not have a relationship with him, I am not going to trust him 100%". Another leader (participant J) said that "inside the office, trust is built mainly on a task-based mentality – you trust someone if the feedback from the stakeholders is positive, if the work is getting done properly and on time, and if he/she can manage themselves. However, you always need to create a human relationship to boost the trust levels. This is complementary, but certainly not the key to trust building.".

Despite this, when "pushed" to give a straight answer, the majority of leaders characterized the Portuguese as relationship-based humans (leaders A, B, C, D, F and G). This stems from the intrinsic

need of bonding, of feeling like you belong to a certain group or team, from the overall historical background of familiar companies and from the fact that Portuguese are very people-oriented.

Disagreeing

Disagreements and conflicts are a common occurrence in a team. For the 10 leaders who were interviewed, the Portuguese, in general, tend to avoid confrontation whenever possible. The fact of the matter is that as Portuguese are more indirect, relationship-based, and people-focused, it is expected that they shy away from conflict.

All the participants mentioned that even if this is a very personal characteristic and not really a culture-wide feature, the Portuguese will more commonly avoid confrontation. Two of the interviewees (leaders E and F) firmly believe that this is not affected by culture, but by personality and work experiences. Additionally, leader F makes a very interesting side note – "With someone at your own level, it is easier to confront and be more upfront. If you are speaking with someone more junior, you should try to be a little bit gentler.". Overall, the Portuguese culture was characterized by its tendency to avoid confrontation, even if many of the leaders stressed that it has a lot to do with the person, and less to do with his/her culture.

Scheduling

The scheduling scale of Meyer's model was used to evaluate how the leaders perceived Portuguese time management. Here, when comparing flexible cultures with linear cultures, Portuguese were certainly defined more often as flexible. However, another common indication given was the fact that businesses are adopting (or trying to adopt) a more linear time management approach to avoid inefficiency. Participant A went on to say "I am very positive about the Portuguese culture, but if there is anything I would change, this would be one of the features. There is a huge inefficiency related to the amount of time we spend waiting for each other.".

As with other cultural features discussed, this one was no stranger to the phrase "it depends on the person and not on the culture". Here, leaders noted that they have worked with more flexible people and more linear-time people, no matter from which culture they are from. In conclusion, the participants see the Portuguese culture as being more flexible with time, even if this is a changing situation and it largely depends on the person, and not only on his/her culture.

Persuading

How Portuguese people persuade others was a very interesting scale to discuss with the leaders since a lot of them feel that this does not depend on culture, but on the person's personality, experience and thought processes. Nonetheless, the most common view was that Portuguese are an applications-

first culture. This was justified by the fact that it is a very opinionated culture, with people wanting their own ideas to be considered and therefore not losing any time in putting them out there. Leader B even characterized the Portuguese way of persuading as "feelings-first". What he meant was that people often lead with "I believe this could be good for the company" and only afterwards focus on strategy and plan. He even gave his own way of working as a specific example, by saying that first he had to believe in what he was doing and then we would find a way of winning.

As mentioned before, a common denominator was that this particular feature depends on the person, not on the culture. For leaders E and J, it depends on the experience of the person – the more senior they are, the more applications-first they tend to be, as their recommendations, opinions and statements have proven to be valid in the past, enabling them to skip justifications and go straight to their view. Leader E went on to say that he believes that this is purely related to how people think and structure their ideas – some people struggle with turning their complex thought processes into a linear communication, and hence mentioning all the steps taken to get to their conclusion helps them stay in the correct line of thought.

The Portuguese Culture Map

As we saw in the Literature Review, Meyer (2015) defined the main cultural characteristics of the Portuguese culture according to her model. However, after probing the 10 leaders that participated in the study, it is now possible to draw a new version of Portugal's culture map based on the research results:
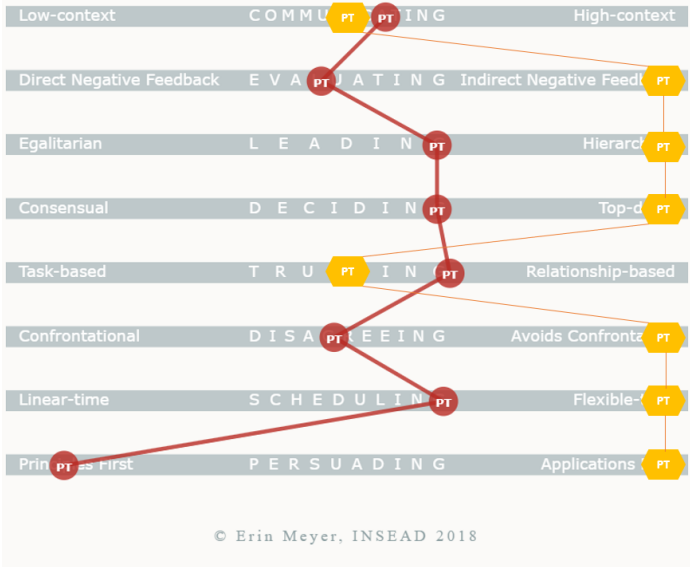

Figure 2.1 - Portugal's Culture Map (based on research findings)

Red: Erin Meyer's (2015) characterization

Gold: Characterization based on research findings

A couple of notes are worth mentioning in regards to this characterization of the Portuguese culture, based on the research findings. Firstly, the placing on each scale is based on the majority answer for each question. In other words, the leaders were not asked to directly place the Portuguese culture in each scale, nor were they asked to specifically evaluate the Portuguese in a range that would have enabled to statistically determine the average placement in each of Meyer's (2015) scales. The placement that you see above is done taking into consideration only both extremes and the middle of the scale – if the majority of leaders answered one extreme, that is where the Portuguese culture was placed (ex: in the evaluating scale, seven leaders answered that Portuguese tend to prefer indirect negative feedback and thus Portugal was placed in that extreme of the scale).

In addition to this, the placement in Erin Meyer's (2015) culture map that is depicted in gold, which has taken into consideration the research findings and the aforementioned note, does not mean one should characterize the Portuguese culture in those extremes. What can be concluded from this portrayal of Portugal is to which extreme of the scale its culture tends to. For example, in the scheduling scale, the fact that Portugal has been placed in the "flexible-time" extreme of it, only means that the Portuguese tend to be a more flexible, rather than linear-time culture. A comparison between both lines will be discussed in the subsequent chapter, as the main differences that are apparent between the red and gold characterization are surely worth analysing in further detail.

3.2. Cultural Differences – Barriers or Drivers to Success?

After investigating the leaders' opinion on their own culture, it was important to understand what they thought of their subordinates' culture and if the differences affected their leadership. For this topic, the research suggests the following results:

Cultural Differences between leaders and team members	Japanese and Chinese have a remarkably more hierarchical leadership style than the Portuguese.
	The Chinese devotion to their work comes as a shock to the Portuguese.
	The Chinese have severely different relationship-building processes from the Portuguese.
	British and Spanish are much less concerned with other people's emotions, in comparison to the Portuguese.
	The Norwegian focus much more on long-term planning than the Portuguese.
Main Findings	Cultures that are more geographical distant from Portugal are the most different.
	Cultural discrepancies are not an obstacle to successfully working as a team.
	Culture is not the most important factor when it comes to identifying someone as different.
	Cultural diversity impacts the team positively - it is a driver for success.

Table 3.2 - Main Cultural Differences and Findings

To achieve the first part of this objective, one single question was asked – "from your subordinates, which nationality is/was the most different from yours? Why?". While eight of the 10 leaders are currently managing mostly European teams, leaders A, B, D, E and G have had experience with non-western cultures, like the ones that belong to the Arab, Far Eastern and the Independent cultural cluster as defined by Ronen & Shenkar (1985). Consequently, those participants who have

dealt with these types of cultures, had no hesitation in mentioning them as the most different. Participant A said that the Japanese culture was the most different for him, due to their very hierarchical leadership style. As an example, the participant recalled a situation where a meeting was booked with one individual to make a decision, and an entourage of 10 people showed up because Japanese will always wait for the boss to make the decision, even if it takes months. Three other leaders (B, D and G) referred to the Chinese as the most different culture. Again, the very strong sense of hierarchy and devotion to their work comes as a shock to Portuguese people. In addition to this, their relationship-building process is extremely different from that of the Portuguese.

When we come geographical closer to Portugal, the nationalities that were mentioned vary from the British, to the Spanish, to the Norwegian and also to the North American. In this sense, the British were characterized as much less relationship-based, less emotional and by having a "first me then you" mentality, which is quite the opposite of the Portuguese way of thinking. It was interesting to see the Spanish referred as the most different nationality, due to the geographic proximity. However, the rationale behind this answer was that Spanish people tend to not care as much about other people and their feelings, once again differing from the Portuguese. The Norwegian culture was mentioned due to the high focus on long-term planning. The leader that gave this answer – leader J - exemplified by saying that he had a Norwegian employee who had a very detailed 15 to 20 years plan for his life, which is very different from the "living day-to-day" mentality of the Portuguese. And finally, the North Americans were also characterized as the most different nationality due to their tendency to be such "big personas" and so "sales-focused".

Nonetheless, a couple of very clear conclusions can be taken for this topic. Firstly, the cultures that are more geographical distant from Portugal (i.e. the Far Eastern, the Arab, and others) are the ones that leaders see as the most different from the Portuguese. However, it is worth noting that even after identifying specific cultures as very different from the Portuguese, all leaders mentioned that although with discrepancies in terms of culture, this was never an obstacle to successfully working as a team. They certainly had to adapt to certain features of their team members, but that adaption was never a barrier to their successful leadership. In addition to this, most leaders made it very clear that they feel that culture is not the most important factor when it comes to them identifying someone as very different from themselves. Leader H even said:

"I think about people, not cultures, when you ask me this question."

After understanding what each leader thought of their own and their subordinates' culture, it is important to comprehend how can those cultural differences impact a team's success and its leadership. Are they drivers for creativity and innovation? Or are they barriers to the performance of the group?

With no exception, all leaders responded that having cultural diversity in a team impacts it in a positive way. What is then curious is the multitude of justifications for the same answer. Leader A mentioned that "diversity makes people derive from different experiences and that brings value to the project", like a French person challenging a project assignment right away instead of just accepting it, which enables the team to rethink and re-evaluate the whole process. Additionally, cultural differences make everyone more flexible, more tolerant and it is easier to manage other people in other teams. Being aware of other cultures and ways of behaving can go a long way in optimizing the traditional processes of organizations. For example, participant C remembered that the company's technological team used to be mainly Portuguese, but now that the Chief Technological Officer has experienced managing several nationalities, it has facilitated the recruitment process. Furthermore, in a truly multicultural team where the majority of the members are speaking a second language (English for example) there is automatically a common stepping stone (the fact that nobody is speaking their own language) for all members and the environment becomes immediately more professional because nobody is separated from the others. From there, the foundation for the relationships that are built becomes the work that is done, and they can then be developed on to the personal level. Another benefit that comes from cultural differences inside a team is the transfer of knowledge or the complementarity between team members. One example given by leader I was that, in general, Portuguese are not really built to sell, while Spanish and Brazilian are not only built to sell, but also need to sell in order to enjoy their work. This diversity means that either the Portuguese see their selling tasks attributed to the more gifted Spanish and/or Brazilian, freeing them to do things in which they can excel, or they learn from their colleagues and become better salespeople. In a nutshell, cultural diversity inside a team enables synergies between all members which in turn means that there is a common base for the team, but then each individual ads a specific perspective and view. As participant J puts it - "the final soup turns out to be very interesting.".

As with most conversational topics that were covered during the interviews, this one did not escape exceptions to the rule. Even though the general opinion is that cultural differences are positive for a team, some difficulties that come from this heterogeneity were mentioned. The main challenge that was identified is simply related to managing people with very different habits and behaviours. An example provided by leader H was that for the Chinese it is not uncommon to work 18 hours a day, while in a Nordic culture (like the Swedish), people "religiously" leave the office at 5pm, even if they have an urgent matter at hand. It is therefore easy to comprehend the challenges that come from having such different people in the same room.

While all leaders quickly identified positive aspects of having several cultures in a team, only leaders H and I mentioned the challenges that come with it, making it possible to conclude that, from

the 10 Portuguese leaders who participated, the common opinion is that cultural differences are drivers to the success of a team.

3.3. Leadership of Multicultural Teams

The main purpose of this thesis is to provide Portuguese leaders with some guidance into how to lead MCTs and, as with many other managerial or business aspects, one of the best learning methods is to observe others who have been in your position before you. Therefore, all 10 interviews finished with two separate discussions in terms of leading multicultural teams. Table 3.3 is used to summarize both the obstacles that a Portuguese leader of a MCT must surpass and the strategies he/she must implement to successfully manage cultural diversity:

Cultural Obstacles	Adapting to a more direct communication style.
	Adjusting to cultures which restrain from building relationships outside the workplace.
	Understanding the other person and his/her own perspective.
	Motivating each team member given their different wants and needs.
Strategies to successfully lead a MCT	Listen to your team members (understand their strengths, weaknesses, motivations and try to help each member in their individual manner.
	Understand yourself and the context you are inserted in.

Table 3.3 - Main Findings on Leadership of MCTs

In the first place, the main obstacles that a leader of a MCT faces were discussed. On one hand, leader A mentioned the required adaption to a more direct communication, especially if it comes from a subordinate. Also, he talked about the difficulty in adjusting to cultures which restrain from building relationships outside the workplace, since that is an important factor in the Portuguese culture. Another common challenge was the ability to understand the other person and his/her own perspective, while comprehending that your own instinct might not make sense for that specific situation. In line with understanding each person, leader J mentioned the difficulties he faced in terms of motivating each team member – some cultures prefer short-term benefits, while other would much rather have a long-term plan set out for them.

After talking about the obstacles that were faced, a very direct question was asked to the interviewees – "what would be your suggestions for a Portuguese who is going to lead a multicultural team?". This final topic of the interview was surely the one that made the participants think the most in terms of their own experience and knowledge. The most frequent suggestion was "listen to your team members" (five out of 10 leaders directly recommended that a leader of a multicultural team must listen to his/her team members very carefully). With this, the leaders meant that you should understand their strengths, help them in their weaknesses, know who they really are, who their family is, what motivates them and try to comprehend how you can help each team member in his/her own individual manner. Another advice that was given was that you should understand yourself and the context you are going to be inserted in. Firstly, only after fully understanding yourself can you start to

understand others. If you are not able to read your own skills, flaws, and motivations, it will be very difficult for you to read your team members'. Additionally, you need to be aware of your surroundings, of the stakeholders, of the people that are already working in that situation and use this knowledge to your own advantage. Also, you must grasp the diverse regulations of the environment, listen to those who have come before you to make sure your decisions are the wisest ones and to collect important insights on how to navigate that specific situation. Naturally, you need to have some information on the cultures you are going to lead, but, as leader A puts it:

"Understand each person in your team individually, do not put them in the cultural box, because if you do, you are going to want him/her to fit that box, and that could be a very big mistake."

To sum up, being a leader of a multicultural team is to lead a team in which the members have specific characteristics. This is probably why most of the recommendations that were given would be the same if directed at a leader of a monocultural team. However, specific details must be attended to when dealing with cultural diversity, such as ensuring that there is no cultural discrimination, enabling people to live their lives in accordance to their own beliefs and habits, and understanding that everyone is different and can perceive situations in the most diverse manners. Overall, leadership is about knowing your team, understanding how to motivate them and being aware of what specific aspects must be taken into consideration when evaluating a special situation. And the leaders who were interviewed did not stray too far away from this perspective on leadership.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

With the basis set in the literature review chapter and the findings that resulted from the interviews that were performed, it is now possible to truly discuss and attempt to answer the research questions. To do so, one should firstly compare the research results with the concepts, perspectives and views that have already been explored and stated by other past authors, in an effort to either confirm or discredit the existing literature on these topics.

4.1. Research findings

Understanding how cultural characteristics impact a team's success, how can they become barriers or drivers to that success and what strategies leaders can apply to successfully manage cultural diversity in their teams is a very valuable tool for current managers in the global business world. By comparing the extant literature with the research findings, it is possible to arrive at some interesting conclusions.

Main Characteristics of the Portuguese Culture

First of all, when we compare Meyer's (2015) characterization of the Portuguese culture, with the one derived from the interviews (see Figure 3.1) it is clear that there are some noticeable divergences in some scales. The most obvious one relates to the persuading scale, where the two depictions are the complete opposite of one another. While Meyer (2015) places Portugal in the "principles-first" extreme of the scale, meaning that they tend to develop and state the underlying theory and justification before they present their fact, opinion or statement, the research findings put the Portuguese in the other end of the scale, as a culture that first presents their recommendations, and only after justifies them. While the author does not offer any clear justifications for the portrayal of Portugal as such a culture, it is possible to arrive at some feasible reasons for this discrepancy. On one hand, a common note that the leaders gave was that Portuguese people enjoy giving their opinions, they want to feel like their opinion matters to the team, and therefore jump at the chance of speaking their minds, without putting too much thought into it, which led the participants to say that the Portuguese first present their arguments, recommendations or opinions. Also, since my sample was fully comprised of leaders who must assume strong positions, it is normal that their experience resonates more with a person being assertive, giving their opinion and only justifying it if required. To support my findings, Rego & Cunha (2010) note that Portuguese employees tend to want to please their supervisors which results in accepting what the leader says. Consequently, the difference between the findings and the literature can result from my sample having an abnormal perspective of what needs to be justified, since leaders are not normally questioned in the Portuguese culture.

A second variation can be seen in the disagreeing scale. In this case, while the research data placed Portugal as a culture that tends to avoid confrontation, the author characterized the Portuguese culture as neither confrontational, nor "confrontation avoiders". The research findings are corroborated by Rego & Cunha (2010), as they characterize the Portuguese culture as a feminine one, which thus means that low assertiveness is the norm and people avoid confrontation and direct/frank communication. As it was said by leader C, the Portuguese tend to be emotional and to be people-pleasers and hence do not want to risk hurting the other person. As a result, and even if the Portuguese enjoy giving their opinions, they will tend to make sure they are not offending someone or causing an unwanted conflict before they speak, and therefore can be seen as confrontation-avoiders.

Additionally, while Meyer (2015) states that the Portuguese culture tends to be more relationship-based when it comes to trust, the findings suggest that it is not possible to place Portugal closer to none of the extremes of the scale. Overall, all leaders believe that one way of building trust is not enough, as they complement each other and help the trust building process to result in a more solid relationship. As leader J explained, "in the work environment, trust is built mainly on a task-based mentality, meaning that a person trusts a colleague if the feedback from other stakeholders is positive, if the work is getting done properly and on time, and if he/she can manage themselves. Nonetheless, there is always a need to create a human relationship to boost the trust levels. This is complementary, but certainly not the key to trust building". It is curious to notice that even though it was concluded from the research that the Portuguese are an emotional and people-focused culture, it is also possible to state that they do not focus only on making friends in the work place, as they also place a high level of importance in how the other person is performing, and first need to trust that person's performance before they can develop a closer relationship.

And finally, the last scale in which the research results differ from those of Meyer (2015) is the evaluating one. In this case, the author places Portugal in the middle of the scale, meaning that the Portuguese people do not tend to be too direct, nor too indirect, when providing feedback. On the opposite side of things, seven out of the 10 leaders gravitated to the "indirect negative feedback" side of the scale, with justifications such as "the Portuguese try to emphasize the positive, even if the result is not the best" (leader D) and "in terms of our background, giving straight negative feedback can be seen as rash and unpolite in the Portuguese culture, so there is a big restriction in terms of being direct in any type of communication" (leader E). Additionally, according to Rego & Cunha (2010) the Portuguese culture can be described by being a high power distance culture, which leads employees to experience difficulty in challenging authority and in voicing their concerns (Paine & Organ, 2000, cited by Rego & Cunha, 2010), hence providing even more credibility to these results. Once again, the strong "people-focused mentality" of the Portuguese is visible in these research findings, as they do

not feel particularly comfortable with being harsh to another person and prefer to tread lightly around possibly sensitive topics.

It is rather curious to see that all four big differences between the extant literature and the research findings in regards to the main cultural characteristics of the Portuguese came back to the same topic – the Portuguese culture's emotionality and people-focus. As the interviews were performed, this focus became quickly apparent, as all leaders carefully stated that even if they were trying to generalize their experiences in order to provide a straight answer, generalization is not a good leadership practice and that one should focus on the individual and on how that specific person behaves. Also, though no interaction with their subordinates happened, every time a leader mentioned a less positive aspect of a culture (based on their experience), they immediately noted that they knew other people from that culture were probably different, showing exactly the type of emotional intelligence and awareness that the findings suggest to be characteristic of the Portuguese people.

The differences between what the literature says of the Portuguese culture and how Portuguese leaders of MCTs portray their own culture are quite noticeable. The most interesting aspect to notice is that the scales in which the results differed the most from those of Meyer (2015), were corroborated by further theory and are all related to personal interactions which have a purpose of conveying a specific, possible contrary, message to the counterpart – persuading, disagreeing and indirect negative feedback (while the trusting scale also demonstrated different results, the gap between them is not as perceptible). It is feasible that this is a personal perception problem. In other words, as Meyer (2015) designed Portugal's cultural map based on her own perceptions and experiences (no matter how vast they might have been), her perception of these types of personal interactions are only that – perceptions. On the other hand, the leaders who were interviewed have not only seen these interactions, as they have been on both sides of them, talked with colleagues in the same position and therefore probably have a better grasp of reality.

Cultural Differences – Barriers or Drivers to Success?

The goal of addressing culture and the differences between cultures in a team was to try to comprehend how can those discrepancies impact a team's performance, and ultimately conclude if they are drivers or barriers to a team's success. As it was said before, the existing literature varies between both answers, with some authors debating that cultural diversity brings a wider scope of perspectives to a group's problem-solving possibilities, and others stating that cultural differences are sometimes too strong and the team's processes end up suffering, which results in a less successful team.

However, this debate between two opposite sides was non-existing in the empirical research, as all 10 leaders identified cultural diversity as a factor that impacts a team in a positive way. It is worth noting that the reasons that supported these answers matched the ones explained by past authors. Nonetheless, it was also recognized by leaders H and I that differences between team members, especially if they are intrinsically built in them, can become a challenge that requires some adjusting to, but this never prompted them to have any type of negative opinion towards cultural diversity in a team. The fact that between the participants there was no contrasting opinions (contrary to what happens in the extant literature) demonstrates that cultural differences are indeed drivers to the success of a team, and also goes to show that a proper leader appreciates diversified opinions, perspectives and views as inputs to his/her team, and more importantly sees the difficulties that emerge from these as a mere adjustment that needs to be done, rather than a hindrance to having a successful culturally heterogeneous team. But what else is required from a leader of a multicultural team? What skills must he/she possess besides the ability to adapt to different members?

Leadership of Multicultural Teams

The most desired outcome from my work was to have the ability to grasp the skills, competencies, and abilities which a leader must possess in order to successfully manage a MCT. After having set the theoretical framework in this field of study, this research essentially confirmed a lot of what the literature had already explained, namely in terms of Chan & Tharenou's (2004) theme "Cultural empathy" (see Table 1.2). Both the authors and the leaders who were interviewed state that it is important to be aware of how the subordinates interact and the different values they place on various aspects of life and work, to be understanding and respectful of the differences that may arise between cultures and values, but also to treat people as individuals and do not place them in "cultural boxes" (as leader A said), to put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to interpret situations from their point of view and finally, to have real-life multicultural experiences in order to understand how to manage these situations.

Nevertheless, there was one key divergence between what the literature says and what the research findings suggest – the participants do not believe that leading a multicultural team is specifically different from leading a monocultural team. To better explain this, it is important to reinforce that they surely comprehend that one must be aware of the fact that cultural diversity in a team has a strong impact in how you should manage it, but they see this to be true to any type of diversity. In other words, even if it is a team of people from the same culture, the leader must be able to be empathetic to the differences that arise simply from having several individuals working together, as any type of diversity (cultural, gender, age, or others) always requires the same set of leadership

skills. The best way to summarize this point is leader E's quote, when asked what suggestions he would give to a Portuguese who was going to lead a MCT:

"You do not need specific advice to manage different cultures, you need advice to manage people. The problems you will face are not culture-based, but rather people-based."

4.2. Literature Contributions

With this thesis, future and present Portuguese and non-Portuguese leaders of multicultural teams now have another tool to help them. The main contributions to the literature relate to the characterization of the Portuguese culture, as there is very few information on this topic, and the strategies leaders can apply to their leadership in order to successfully manage cultural diversity in their teams. In the first place, and utilizing Meyer's (2015) model, it is possible to state the general tendencies of the Portuguese culture. In terms of communicating, a Portuguese person cannot be depicted as either a high-context, nor low-context communicator, which essentially means that how an individual communicates will depend more on his/her own personality, and the Portuguese people cannot be expected to get their messages across in the same manner.

If you are in a position of giving negative feedback to a Portuguese, or receiving it from one, do expect them to lean towards a more indirect approach rather than a direct one. It is acceptable to await negative messages to be soften with positive reinforcement, as the Portuguese will generally attempt to avoid running the risk of offending you. On the other hand, if you are providing the feedback, be aware of the Portuguese emotionality and make sure your interaction does not further harm the person's performance, since the consequences of a feedback session depend as much on the person who receives it, as on the person who provides it.

The Portuguese culture tends to have a more hierarchical leadership style in which the leader is supposed to be the one who guides his subordinates and directs them to the right path. Again, it is important to stress that this does not depend solely on the leader, as team members can also behave in ways that foster this type of leadership, such as assuming that every note, comment, suggestion and/or idea that a leader gives is to be taken as an immediate and direct order. Consequently, one should await an environment where people look at the authority figure to solve the problems, give directions and assume control of what the team executes.

Hand in hand with the leadership style of the Portuguese culture, the decision-making process also gravitates towards the top-down extreme of the scale. As said before, since the Portuguese look at the leader as the one who should direct the team towards success, they also expect the leader to make all the important decisions. An important point worth mentioning is that three out of the 10 leaders that participated in this study do not believe in this way of deciding and also stated that younger leaders are now more capable of understanding the benefits that consensual decision-making

brings to a team's performance. Therefore, a possible turn in how decisions are made in the Portuguese culture would not be fully surprising.

Even if the Portuguese can be characterized as an emotional culture, their concerns are not only placed on their relationships and interactions with others. In other words, without dispatching the importance of building a relationship to gain trust with someone, it is as important to trust their work and to believe they can perform. This contribution to the literature is key to understand that the Portuguese culture can be described as a people-focused one, but it still cares tremendously about the ability to perform in the workplace, and thus trust is built with a combination of task-based and relationship-based events – you need both components if you wish to be trusted by a Portuguese.

An important aspect to retain is that all possibly uncomfortable and unpleasant situations will generally be avoided by the Portuguese. Notwithstanding, this is a very risky feature to generalize to all Portuguese people because, as covered before, the high sensibility to emotions that the Portuguese have can also bring about individuals that are less worried about offending someone else than being offended themselves.

When it comes to time management, the Portuguese tend to apply a more flexible approach to it, as they are not too concerned with following designated time slots and steps in a project, meeting, or any encounter. What is also crucial to point out is the overall discontent that the leaders showed with this cultural trait of the Portuguese, often mentioning the need and effort that is being put into by companies, leaders and teams in general, to adopt a more linear-time approach and therefore avoid the multiple inefficiencies that occur due to the current ways of doing things.

And finally, the opinionated nature of the Portuguese leads them to gravitate towards a more applications-first manner of presenting their arguments, as they are anxious to give their personal views and opinions, and only after that worry about justifying them. This first contribution that this work has brought to the literature has a very important note that must be taking into consideration – characterizing a culture as a whole should be used as the basis to understand someone, but should never replace an individual comprehension of the team member.

The second contribution that this work brings to the existing literature on the leadership of multicultural teams' field of study relates to the strategies that multicultural leaders can apply to successfully manage cultural diversity in their teams. The main and most commonly mentioned approach to thrivingly leading a MCT was to have cultural empathy, which means that a leader should understand that people are motivated by different aspects, that differences will naturally arise and should be respected, and must also comprehend that they should treat people as individuals, rather than only as members of a culture. Additionally, the leaders should put themselves in the team members' shoes and have their own multicultural experiences, in order to understand and respect the differences and obstacles that appear in these types of situations. Besides the two above-mentioned

direct contributions to the theory, this thesis has also further corroborated past concepts and ideas such as the fact that cultural differences are indeed positive to a team and can be drivers to its success.

4.3. Implications for Leadership

As this study was performed with a practical framework in terms of research objectives, it is now possible to infer some practical implications for leadership which can be derived from both my research findings and discussion. First of all, while culture is certainly a factor that needs to be considered when looking at how one should lead a certain team member, it is not a best practice to portray a certain image of a culture and assume that every individual that belongs to it, will fit those same descriptions. It is important to be culturally aware and understand that with different cultures, come divergent values, habits and behaviours, but culture cannot be fully accountable for those differences – every individual is different and should not be placed inside a "cultural box". Consequently, leaders who are faced with the challenge of managing a multicultural team should try to understand the culture of each of the team's members so they can better prepare to deal with eventual differences that may arise, but always keep in mind that each individual is different and that they should not assume that two people from the same culture will have the same preferences, will be motivated by the same factors or will behave in the same way.

The second implication for leadership is that cultural differences definitely impact a team's success and, if properly managed, will most likely be drivers to it. This knowledge means that leaders cannot overlook the cultural disparities that are present in a team, assuming that they do not impact its success. Furthermore, they must realize that cultural diversity enables the team to have more than one way of addressing problems, which ultimately leads to more creativity and innovation in terms of developing the solutions. This is not only an implication for leaders, but also for companies, as they must continue on this journey of adopting multicultural and global teams, since they are proving to be valuable tools to ensure an organization's success in the global context we currently live in.

The third and final implication of my work is that the way challenges must be managed by leaders of MCTs is not particularly different from the way they would have to deal with any other obstacles that are normal to occur. In other words, even though they must be aware that culture brings specific differences to come up within a team, those differences are still related to people and hence, to manage them, a leader must listen to his/her subordinates, must understand them individually and must be able to see things from their perspective. This skill is the same for a leader to deal with cultural differences, gender differences, age differences, personality differences, and all other types of differences that will naturally come up when one is working with a group of different people. Hopefully, these practical implications will enable current and future leaders to be better prepared

when they are faced with the task of leading people from different backgrounds, with contrasting behaviours, perspectives and cultures.

4.4. Limitations and Future Research

While this study was able to contribute to the existing literature and to the comprehension of how Portuguese leaders should manage MCTs, it is not lacking some limitations. The initial goal of this research was to focus on how Portuguese leaders managed subordinates from a specific cultural cluster, which would have enabled am even further narrowing of the research and find results that could be directly implemented in real-life situations. As it was not possible to achieve this objective, one limitation of this study is the lack of focus in one culture or cultural cluster of the subordinates, which resulted in the research findings being slightly more generic than what was initially desired.

Another sample-related limitation is the fact that only leaders were interviewed. It would have been interesting to speak with subordinates and understand if their views were similar to the ones of the leaders, or if the difference in roles meant there was a difference in their personal perspectives. Furthermore, all leaders have quite similar profiles, with all of them being males and the majority being between 30 and 35 years old. Female leaders and leaders with more experience in the business world could have meant different results, as, once again, they could perceive situations differently to how the participating leaders do.

The last limitation is connected to the model chosen to characterize culture. Meyer's (2015) culture map stems from personal experiences and observations of the author, which can naturally be somewhat biased. A model constructed by tangible and reliable data would have enabled a more solid portrayal of the Portuguese culture and hence a deeper understanding of its main characteristics, even if the one chosen for this thesis was the one that appeared to be more easily transposable to real-life situations, due to its actuality and business-based scales.

Future researchers are called to widen the scope of this work, by enlarging the sample in terms of profiles of the leaders, of the position of those interviewed (i.e. include the subordinates and focus on one culture or cultural cluster), and of the overall size of it. If this enlargement is performed, a much narrower and reliable set of results will surface, and thus Portuguese leaders will have an even more concrete guide into leading subordinates from a specific culture or cultural cluster.

Moreover, the literature would benefit from an unbiased model which could be used by different researchers to characterize distinct cultures. As leadership will certainly maintain its importance in the academic world, the cultural aspect of it must not be left behind, as there is a growing need for leaders to understand how they must cope not only with multicultural subordinates, but also international stakeholders. A sturdy model to describe the business behaviours of a specific culture would be an

invaluable tool that would enable global leaders to set the basis for any international relationship they might develop.

4.5. Conclusion

Following the detailed discussion that the last chapter embodied, it is important to summarize the main conclusions. Firstly, for a leader to fully understand his/her team members, he/she must first be able to understand his/her own personal features. This is the underpinning reason that justified the study of the Portuguese culture, and ultimately arrive at the main cultural characteristics that define it. From the research findings and subsequent discussion, it is possible to identify six essential cultural features – the Portuguese tend to prefer negative feedback to be given in an indirect manner, their leadership style is generally more hierarchical than egalitarian, the decision-making processes are more regularly defined by being top-down, they tend to avoid confrontation, they are flexible towards time and time management, and finally they persuade people by first stating their opinion, statement or fact, and only after justifying it with the underpinning concepts and/or ideas.

A second conclusion of my work is the clear view that cultural differences are drivers to the success of the team, as they bring more creativity, innovation, and simply overall distinct perspectives to the team's natural processes. This is a conclusion with serious implications for the business world, as it shows that companies should strive to have multicultural teams, especially in the globalized and connected world we are all a part of, if they wish to keep up with the worldwide trend of internationalization. Also, leaders that are putting together their own teams must be aware of the benefits that cultural diversity can bring, as long as if it is properly managed.

Moreover, the best strategy that Portuguese leaders can apply to their leadership in order to successfully manage the before mentioned cultural diversity of their teams is to listen to their subordinates in an individual level. In other words, leaders of MCTs will strongly benefit from understanding the strengths of their subordinates, from knowing their weaknesses and helping them overcome them, from getting to know them at a personal level, from figuring out what motivates them and from comprehending how to help each team member improve in their own individual manner.

The fourth and last big conclusion is that the most important skill a successful multicultural leader must possess is cultural empathy. What is meant by cultural empathy is simply the ability of the leader to put himself/herself in the shoes of the other person and hence being aware that people place different values on distinct aspects of work, that differences are likely to arise and must be respected, and most importantly that each person must be treated as an individual and not simply as a member of a culture.

The aforementioned conclusions summarize the fundamental results of this study and set the basis for future researchers to deepen the knowledge in the area of leading MCTs. Forthcoming work

on this topic should include not only more leaders, but also leaders with more contrasting profiles, as that will naturally prompt a bigger disparity between opinions. Furthermore, an inclusion of the team members (especially if all from the same culture or cultural cluster) could be an interesting way of funnelling down the results and make them even more applicable to real-life situations. Finally, the literature needs an unbiased and updated model of culture characterization, as this would allow researchers to work on top of a common accepted base when dealing with culture.

The thesis has contributed to the field of leadership by adding a cultural factor that has been missing from it. In a continuously more globalized business context, cultural clashes and interactions are inevitable, and only if individuals are aware of the constraints, difficulties, and challenges that cultural differences bring to the table, can they prepare accordingly. With the empirical research and data interpretation, the main objective of the study was completed - to narrow the knowledge gap between the existing literature and the need for managers to understand how to lead multicultural teams.

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Appendixes

Appendix A – Interview Guiding Questions

Part I - Contextualization

1. What is your name, age, and nationality?

2. For how long have you been leading a multicultural team?

3. How many international subordinates are currently report directly to you?

4. What are the nationalities of your subordinates? / From your subordinates, what are the 3 most common nationalities?

Part II – Culture and Cultural Differences

1. One of the key characteristics of teams is the way they communicate. How would you characterize Portuguese communication? Can you please give examples? *(If needed, contextualize between low-context or high-context)*

2. Feedback, especially negative, and how it is provided is often viewed as a very important factor for team members. In your opinion, how does feedback work in the Portuguese culture? Please explain and/or give examples. *(If needed, contextualize between direct and indirect negative feedback)*

3. As you see it, how do Portuguese people present their arguments and try to persuade others? Can you please provide examples? *(If needed, contextualize between principles-first [theory or concept > fact, statement, or opinion] and applications-first [fact, statement, or opinion > concepts to explain])*

4. How would you define the Portuguese leading style? Please explain. *(If needed, contextualize between egalitarian and hierarchical)*

5. Decision-making plays a huge role in a team's success. How does it work in the Portuguese culture? Can you please give examples? *(If needed, contextualize between consensual and top-down)*

6. How is trust built in the Portuguese culture? Can you please provide examples? *(If needed, contextualize between task-based and relationship-based)*

7. In all teams, disagreement is present at a given point. How do Portuguese deal with confrontation? Please explain. *(If needed, contextualize between confrontational or avoid confrontation)*

8. Regarding scheduling, punctuality, and overall time management, how would you characterize the Portuguese? Can you please explain and/or give examples? *(If needed, contextualize between linear-time or flexible time)*

9. From your subordinates, which nationality is the most different from yours? Why?

Part III - Multicultural Teams (MCTs)

1. Do you believe that those cultural differences have impacted in any way (positively or negatively) your team? How? Please give examples.

Part IV – Leadership Competencies and Skills

1. What is the biggest obstacle you have faced as a Portuguese leader of a multicultural team?

2. What would be your suggestions for a Portuguese who is going to lead a multicultural team?